



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JANUARY 15 2011

Scripture Story: Genesis 4:1-16.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, chapter 5.

out of control



Photo by Colleen Cahill

flashlight

"Notwithstanding that Cain had by his crimes merited the sentence of death, a merciful Creator still spared his life, and granted him opportunity for repentance. But Cain lived only to harden his heart, to encourage rebellion against the divine authority, and to become the head of a line of bold, abandoned sinners" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 78).

keytext

"Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? Why that scowl on your face? If you had done the right thing, you would be smiling; but because you have done evil, sin is crouching at your door. It wants to rule you, but you must overcome it.'"

(Genesis 4:6, 7, TEV)

what do you think?

Rank in order from hardest (1) to easiest (5).

In which scenario would it be hardest to admit guilt and make a turnaround:

- _____ Cheating on an exam.
- _____ Perusing explicit material on the Web.
- _____ Admitting to someone that you were critical of them behind their back.
- _____ Lying to a friend.
- _____ Owning up to a peer that the reason you are unkind to them is because you envy them.

did you know?

God refused Cain's sacrifice and warned him, "Sin is crouching at the door; . . . but you must master it" (Genesis 4:7, NASB). The word "master" in the Hebrew is *maschal*, which means to rule, reign, or govern with the authority that is given. Cain was given the choice and the power to squash the stubborn pride in his heart.

INTO THE STORY

"Adam lay with his wife

Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, 'With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man.' Later she gave birth to his brother Abel.

"Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

"Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.'

"Now Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let's go out to the field.' And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

"Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Where is your brother Abel?'

"I don't know,' he replied. 'Am I my brother's keeper?'

"The Lord said, 'What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.'

"Cain said to the Lord, 'My punishment is more than I can bear. Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.'

"But the Lord said to him, 'Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over.' Then the Lord put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. So Cain went out from the Lord's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden."

(Genesis 4:1-16, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

What parts of the story are key? (*Underline* them.)

What aspects or details of the story are new to you?
(Place an *arrow* beside them.)

What words or phrases capture the various emotions of this story most? (*Circle* them.)

What emotions, actions, or adjectives enrich this story? (Draw a *rectangle* around them.)

What emerges as the central lesson of this story? In other words, why do you think this story is included in the record of Scripture?

List the major lessons that you see emerge in this story.

What does this text tell us about how sin is not really freedom but bondage? (See Rom. 7:14-25)

If you were to capture this story in five words or less, what would you say?

punch lines

“Resentment kills a fool, and envy slays the simple” (Job 5:2, NIV).

“A man’s own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the Lord” (Proverbs 19:3, NIV).

“Bloodthirsty men hate a man of integrity and seek to kill the upright” (**Proverbs 29:10, NIV**).

“And the Lord said, ‘Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren’” (**Luke 22:31, 32, NKJV**).

“It was faith that made Abel offer to God a better sacrifice than Cain’s” (**Hebrews 11:4, TEV**).

“They overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death” (**Revelation 12:11, NKJV**).

“Salvation is to be found through him alone; in all the world there is no one else whom God has given who can save us” (**Acts 4:12, TEV**).

other eyes

“Hate is born when men call evil good. And like an infant serpent bursting from its small, confining shell, it can never be cased so small again.”—

Calvin Miller, current U.S. poet, preacher, author, and teacher.

“Speak when you are angry—and you’ll make the best speech you’ll ever regret.”

—Laurence J. Peter, 20th-century U.S. educator and writer.

Sabbath

Complete the exercise in the *What Do You Think?* section. Why do you think it would be hard to confess and admit that particular shortcoming? What do you think makes owning up to sin difficult? Is it the shame you feel or is it because you think that feeling might go away in time? What are the benefits of honest confession to God and others?

As you reflect on Cain's fall down the slippery slope, in what way is his story a warning to you?

Sunday

Read the story of Cain and Abel in the *Into the Story* section of this week's lesson and work through the study questions listed in *Out of the Story*. As you read the story and note how Cain's rebellion picked up momentum, how do you see this problem among your peers today? Is the slippery slope of Cain's rebellion still part of the landscape of the lives of young people in your world? If so, in what way? What does this slippery slope look like today?

Monday

Read the *Key Text* and consider how much God tried to get Cain to turn from his anger and repent. Look at each phrase God speaks to Cain and note the attitude of God toward Cain. Is it possible that God is trying to get your attention today about an area of your life that can get out of control?

Everyone has weaknesses and areas of their life that can lead them on a steep downward path. What can you do today to enable God's grace to work in your life and strengthen those weak areas?

Tuesday

The quote in the *Flashlight* section reveals that the sin of Cain was as much in the continued resistance and pride of heart as it was in the act of killing his brother. Cain's rebellion closely resembles Lucifer's, and highlights the patient grace of God as well.

Think of someone you know who admits their faults right away and has learned the value of honest and immediate confession. How do other people perceive this person? What are some things you have learned from them that you think will help you respond to God's voice promptly?

Wednesday

Read the *Punch Lines* for this week and identify the one verse that is speaking directly to your life today. What do you think God is trying to say to you in that passage? Is there an area of your life in which you might be (or about to be) running out of control? What do you think you should do to make a U-turn?

When God spoke to Cain, He warned the young man that his response to his sin would be a pivotal moment in life. What pivotal moments do you face? Do you know someone who is running out of control downhill? Take time to pray for them. Consider writing them a letter letting them know of your prayers.

Thursday

Read chapter 5 in *Patriarchs and Prophets* and note the steps of Cain's fall. Look for insights into this story that you may not have

thought of before. For example, did you know that Cain's self-absorbed offering was born out of his anger at God for kicking his parents out of the Garden of Eden? He began each day thinking God was unfair and arbitrary. How do our basic perceptions of God shape the way we relate to Him every day? Continue to search this chapter for new insights and make note of them.

Friday

In spite of Cain's rebellion, God labored with him still. Who has been a godly voice of reason to you—cautioning you about going too far too fast? Try writing them a note thanking them for their influence in your life and think about to whom you could be a voice of grace-filled caution this week.

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this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 5.

*A special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets* has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.